

Minutes (unofficial)

Maryland Council for New Americans

Citizenship Working Group Meeting

Wednesday, February 11, 2009

CASA de Maryland, Silver Spring, MD

1. Welcome and Introductions

Attendance: Gustavo Torres, Eliza Leighton, Anna Anderson, Kaori Hirakawa, Donna Kinerney, Aris Mardrossian, Gail Mogol, Sly Patel, Pastor Jamila Woods-Jones

2. Discussion: Outcomes per Executive Order 01.01.2008.18 (below)

Torres stressed that our outcome is to give recommendations to develop citizenship programs. We will be analyzing policies with emphasis on the four states who already have Executive Orders.

3. Overview of MNAP.

Leighton explained that MNAP was founded to stretch resources and coordinate citizenship efforts. Meetings began 1/2008. CASA de Maryland worked with Tenant Workers United to produce the New Americans Initiative Report after receiving a grant from Carnegie. The report focused on MD/DC/VA to coordinate efforts. Three emphases:

1. Model relies heavily on existing community based organizations as they are trusted by community members
2. Nationalization support centers (NSCs) would coordinate in inclusive way. Report basis for push for naturalization services.
3. NSCs would provide a range of integrated services – pre and post naturalization

Last session, no funds were solidified to implement NSCs. However, Anna Anderson was hired with a planning grant from AmeriCorps.

4. Discussions

Members discussed the feasibility of reaching all 165,000 legal permanent residents. Community-based efforts were central to the plan.

Members discussed about getting information to mail recent immigrants directly given that there is access to databases for the purpose of voting. There was agreement that this type of initiative would have to be done discreetly and carefully.

Anna Anderson gave an explanation of VISTA/MNAP.

- AmeriCorps*VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty.
- Goal of MNAP: To bring together non-profit organizations, educational institutions, businesses, unions and faith communities in Maryland committed to supporting eligible immigrants in their efforts to become U.S. citizens and active members of their communities post-naturalization. The two main priorities of the Partnership are (1) to promote the enactment of the New Americans Initiative in Maryland and (2) to provide the structure for organizations doing naturalization work in Maryland to support and learn from one another.

Lagdameo gave an overview of Maryland's Department of Legislative Services Report and 2007 yearbook from United State's Department of Homeland Security stats. Woods-Jones inquired about the push/pull factors of immigration into Maryland. There was discussion of the economic pulls into Maryland detailed on the Casey Foundation workforce development report. Patel discussed the feasibility of having translators for the citizenship exam. Espinosa/Jones further discussed the California model proposed by Sly Patel about Churches in California and the need of outreach to non-traditional immigrant friendly centers ie. Frederick. Leighton gave a recap of funding for naturalization support centers, county-level initiatives, and the current CASA proposal given to the State. There is possibility of funding from counties

4. Future Meeting Schedule and Communication Tools:

Next meeting: March 12, 2009, Location TBA

Torres gave a last charge for all members to become EXPERTS

The meeting adjourned at 11:30am

From the Executive Order:

Citizenship Working Group. The Citizenship Working Group will plan a broad, coordinated citizenship promotion and assistance program to naturalize Maryland's estimated 175,000 legal permanent residents who are eligible for naturalization at a faster pace.